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Message Text

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43
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 OPIC-03 AID-05

IGA-01 AGR-05 FRB-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /081 W
---------- 123302
R 270825Z AUG 75
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1760

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FOLLOWING
SENT ACTION COLOMBO INFO KARACHI FROM LAHORE
AUGUST 26 BEING REPEATED TO YOU:

QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LAHORE 509

E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJECT: WHEAT PROCUREMENT
REF: ISLAMABAD 7703 (NOTAL)

1. IN RESPONSE REFTEL WE CONTACTED PUNJAB FOOD OFFICIALS WHO INFORMED US THAT 6.6 LAKH TONS -- 73PC OF 9 LAKH TON TARGET FOR WHEAT PROCUREMENT IN PUNJAB -- HAVE ALREADY BEEN PROCURED. OFFICIALS HERE CLEARLY AWARE OF GOP PRESSURE TO FULFILL PROCUREMENT TARGET, BUT EVINCE CONFIDENCE THIS CAN BE ACHIEVED BY MID-SEPTEMBER WITHOUT COERCING FARMERS OR RAISING PROCUREMENT PRICE.

2. OFFICIALS ATTRIBUTE DECLINING PROCUREMENT IN JULY AND AUGUST PARTLY TO ONSET OF MONSOON RAINS AND CONSIDERABLE FLOODING WHICH HAS ADVERSELY AFFECTED TRANSPORT IN SOME
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PARTS OF PROVINCE. THEY EXPECT PROCUREMENT PACE TO PICK

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UP WHEN ROADS OPEN AGAIN AND FARMERS CAN REACH PROCUREMENT CENTERS WITHOUT RISKING WATER DAMAGE TO GRAIN.

3. COMMENT: WHILE PROCUREMENT MAY WELL HAVE DROPPED OFF BECAUSE OF RECENT WEATHER CONDITIONS, WE FEEL LOCAL OFFICIALS ARE OVERLY OPTIMISTIC IN HOPING TO ACHIEVE TARGET BY MID-SEPTEMBER. WITH ONLY 6.6 LAKH TONS SECURED UP TO NOW, IT UNLIKELY THAT ADDITIONAL 2.4 LAKH TONS CAN BE PROCURED OVER NEXT THREE WEEKS WHEN 2.25 LAKH TONS A MONTHS WAS BEST PUNJAB COULD DO DURING HEIGHT OF PROCUREMENT SEASON IN

APRIL AND MAY. OUR OWN ROUGH ESTIMATE IS THAT PROCUREMENT WILL FALL SHORT BY 10 TO 15PC, FOR TOTAL OF ABOUT 8 LAKH TONS FROM PUNJAB.

4. GIVEN COMPARATIVELY MODEST SHORTFALL (ASSUMING THEY GET THIS MUCH) WE DOUBT GOVERNMENT WILL RESORT TO COERCION TO MAKE UP DEFICIT. PROCUREMENT PERFORMANCE APPEARS RESPECT-ABLE COMPARED WITH MASSIVE SHORTFALL EXPERIENCED LAST YEAR, AND WIDESPREAD UNPOPULARITY OF FORCED PROCUREMENT IS LIKELY TO INDUCE CAUTION. HOWEVER, IF DEFICIT SHOULD BE LARGER, SAY IN 20PC RANGE, AUTHORITIES COULD RESORT TO PRESSURE. WE WILL WATCH PROCUREMENT FIGURES OVER NEXT THREE/FOUR WEEKS FOR SIGNS OF POSSIBLE GOP FUTURE ACTIONS, AND WILL REPORT.

5. RELATED INDICATOR: PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER QURESHI DECLARED IN PRESS STATEMENT HERE AUGUST 21 THAT PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO HAD ASKED HIM "TO ENSURE THAT NO COERCION OR OTHER PRESSURE ON WHEAT-GROWERS IS USED BY PUNJAB ADMINISTRATION IN CURRENT WHEAT PROCUREMENT DRIVE." PRIMIN HAD ASKED CHIEF MIN ESPECIALLY TO REASSURE SMALL FARMERS. QURESHI APPEALED TO ALL WHEAT-GROWERS FOR VOLUNTARY SUPPORT AND ARGUED THAT, SINCE COUNTRY CONFIDENTLY LOOKED FORWARD TO

BUMPER WHEAT HARVEST NEXT YEARY FARMERS NOULD SURRENDER ALL WHEAT NOT NEEDED FOR PERSONAL USE WITHOUT FEAR OF SHORTAGE, AND WOULD BE CONTRIBUTING TO "NATIONAL FOOD EFFORT."
SPENGLER

UNQUOTE.
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